

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Fort Ross

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

About 60 miles north of San Francisco

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Fort Ross

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
1st

VICINITY OF

STATE

California

CODE

06

COUNTY

Sonoma

CODE

097

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT
☒ BUILDING(S)
☐ STRUCTURE
☐ SITE
☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC
☐ PRIVATE
☐ BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
☐ IN PROCESS
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☐ OCCUPIED
☒ UNOCCUPIED
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
☒ YES: RESTRICTED
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED
☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE
☐ COMMERCIAL
☐ EDUCATIONAL
☐ ENTERTAINMENT
☐ GOVERNMENT
☐ INDUSTRIAL
☐ MILITARY
☐ MUSEUM
☒ PARK
☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☐ RELIGIOUS
☐ SCIENTIFIC
☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

State of California: Administered by Division of Beaches and Parks

STREET & NUMBER

1125 Tenth Street

CITY, TOWN

Sacramento

VICINITY OF

STATE

California

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Sonoma County Court House

STREET & NUMBER

Sonoma Plaza

CITY, TOWN

Sonoma

STATE

California

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress Annex

CITY, TOWN

Washington,

STATE

D. C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

___EXCELLENT

☒GOOD

___FAIR

___DETERIORATED

___RUINS

___UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒UNALTERED

___ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ORIGINAL SITE

___MOVED

DATE_____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Fort Ross today is a State Historical Monument. It consists of two reconstructed blockhouses, the restored Commandant's House, the restored chapel and a reconstructed stockade enclosing the buildings. It is picturesquely situated on a small shelf on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, hemmed in by grassy hills. The chapel building, although not a completely accurate restoration, contains a considerable portion of the original chapel and is a fine example of Russian construction.

The Russian Orthodox chapel was built about 1825. Sparsely furnished, and used only occasionally--there was no regular priest at Ross--the building remained standing long after the Russians left California. Then during the 1906 earthquake, its walls collapsed. The chapel was restored in 1916-17 and more authentically in 1955-56, only to be completely destroyed by fire in 1970. Following this tragic event, the chapel was once again resurrected. One of the original Russian bells, completely melted by the fire, was recast for display.

The original blockhouses and some parts of the stockade remained standing until the 1906 earthquake, and so it has been possible to reconstruct them with a high degree of accuracy, using original materials to some extent. Made entirely of hand-hewn redwood timbers set two feet in the ground, the 12-foot high stockade included three sally-ports that provided the only entrance to the stockade. Brass and iron cannons were placed in the blockhouses and also defended each sally-port. Some descriptions say that the chapel also served as a bastion, and that brass cannons were mounted on either side of the altar.

During the Russian period, 40 to 50 buildings stood outside of the stockade. These included a number of high-roofed cottages for the Russian members of the community, as well as the flat-topped houses of the Kodiak Islanders or Aleuts, and some cone-shaped dwellings and dance houses built by the Pomo people associated with Ross. These buildings were scattered around the fort on both the seaward and more protected north and east sides. Down in the ravine were several important work buildings including one large building (60' x 80' x 100'), that housed the tannery and boat shop. Several ocean-going ships were built at Ross in the early 1820's.

On the flat, east and south of the ravine, were several carefully fenced agricultural fields, and a monument-filled cemetery. Other important out-buildings included a bath house and a large windmill on the knoll northwest of the fort near the present day parking lot.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	ARCHAEOLOGY PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
1400 1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHAEOLOGY HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
1500 1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1600 1699	ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700 1799	ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
X 1800 1899	COMMERCE	X EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
1900	COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1812-1842

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Ross is a unique site among those which recall the international rivalry in the nineteenth century for political control and a major share in the exploitation of the resources of the Pacific Coast. After Bering's Voyage of 1741, the early recognition by Russia of the value of the American fur trade led to the formation of the Russian American Fur Company and its occupation of Alaska. In search of the prized otter, and spurred by the lack of food supplies at Sitka, the Russians extended their operations to the coast of Spanish California.

The Russian American Company sought to establish permanent trade relations with the Spanish in California, and to establish agricultural depots as a means of supplying the Alaskan posts. After a number of exploratory voyages, Ivan Alexandrovich Ruskof arrived in 1812 with about 100 Russifias, and nearly that many Aleutians, and began construction of Fort Ross. A stockaded fort was constructed. Conservative estimates suggest that the buildings numbered more than 50 and that the population at one time was about 400. From 1812 until 1841 Fort Ross was the center of Russian otter hunting, fur trading, and agricultural activities in Spanish California.

The Russian operations were within territory over which the Spanish Crown claimed sovereignty, and Spanish reaction to Russia's efforts to open trade and receive recognition of the legitimacy of the Russian post fluctuated. Trade continued for the most part, but Spanish demands that Russia evacuate the post were ignored. By 1840, it had become evident to Russia that Fort Ross could not be maintained profitably and it was decided to withdraw from California. Negotiations for the buildings (Russia did not claim ownership of the land) ended in agreement with John Sutter in 1841, who bought everything but the land for \$30,000. Russia evacuated the post early in 1842.

Economically, Fort Ross could not be considered a success. While great numbers of furs and great quantities of food were shipped north, the fort never paid for itself and fur hunting was not profitable. But politically the Fort Ross venture was of considerable consequence. The establishment of the fort vindicated the long Spanish fear of Russian expansion southward which had resulted in the Spanish occupation of Upper California. It is interesting to note that the founding of San Rafael (1817) and Sonoma (1823) missions brought the Greek Church within a few miles of the Roman Church.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

California Historical Society Quarterly, XII, 1933

H. H. Bancroft, California

Guthrie, C.L., "Fort Ross," 1936

Hagen, Olaf T., "Fort Ross," 1941

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.8 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 1 0 4 7 8 8 4 0 4 2 6 2 7 0 0
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point on the northern curb of abandoned Highway #1 that is perpendicular to the picket fence that forms the boundary line of the Call House, proceed north approximately 400' along the picket fence to a point, thence east 200' to a point, thence 400' south to a point, thence west 200' to the point of origin.

This boundary encompasses the original and non-intruded upon area of the original fort site.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Cecil McKithan

9/12/77

ORGANIZATION

DATE

National Park Service - Historic Sites Survey

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1100 L Street, N. W.

523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Washington.

D. C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

Nov 5, 1961

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Boundary Certified:

Henry Emory Sept 27, 1977

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11/16/83

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

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Fort Ross

CONTINUATION SHEET

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The Russian establishment in California had concerned Americans greatly; government officials, Congressional committees and newspapers repeatedly warned of the progress of the Russian empire in the Pacific. The provision of the Monroe Doctrine against further colonization, while specifically directed against Russian advance in the Northwest, was indirectly aimed at the Fort Ross settlement. The withdrawal from Fort Ross ended the only attempt by Russia to colonize in what is now the United States, and ended her control and influence south of Alaska.

(Fort Ross is, of course, primarily a Russian site. Lacking a Russian theme, and with few Russian sites to deal with, it was decided to include it in the Spanish theme because of its importance in the Spanish period.)